

Message Text

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 01 NEW DE 09675 221248Z
ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 L-03 H-01 HA-05 CIAE-00 INR-10
NSAE-00 NEAE-00 /031 W
-----019496 221259Z /45
P R 221208Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2374
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NEW DELHI 9675

E.O. 11652: NA
TAGS: PINT, IN, SHUM
SUBJECT: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY

REF: STATE 155320

1. EOMBOFF DISCUSSED THE NON-GOVERNMENTAL NATWANI COMMISSION AND ITS INVESTIGATION INTO THE DAOODI BOHRA COMMUNITY WITH V.M. TARKUNDE, RETIRED JUSTICE OF THE BOMBAY HIGH COURT AND SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY WHICH ESTABLISHED THE COMMISSION. THE CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY IS A GROUP FOUNDED IN 1974 BY J.P. NARAYAN AND OTHER DISTINGUISHED ADVOCATES OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN ORDER TO PROMOTE AND PROTECT POLITICAL, CIVIL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS IN INDIA. (INDIAN AMBASSADOR TO THE US, N.A. PALKIAVALA, IS A FORMER VICE PRESIDENT OF THE ORGANIZATION.) THE GROUP HAS TAKEN ESPECIAL INTEREST IN SUCH SUBJECTS AS PREVENTIVE DETENTION AND THE RIGHTS OF MINORITY COMMUNITIES.

2. ACCORDING TO TARKUNDE, THE DAOODI BOHRA IS A FAIRLY WELL-OFF COMMUNITY IN GUJARAT AND RAJASTHAN OF SOME HALF MILLION SHIA MOSLEMS PRIMARILY ENGAGED IN TRADE AND COMMERCE. THE COMMUNITY IS CLOSELY LED BY ITS IMAN OR CHIEF PRIEST, SYEDNA MOHAMMED BURHANUDDIN.

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 02 NEW DE 09675 221248Z

COMMUNITY MEMBERS, FOR INSTANCE, TAKE AN OATH OF TOTAL OBEDIENCE TO THE SYEDNA, AND HE HAS TOTAL CONTROL OVER THE VARIOUS "TAXES" ASSESSED ON EACH MEMBER. REFORM-MINDED MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY HAVE COMPLAINED THAT THEIR RIGHTS HAVE BEEN INFRINGED BY THE ORDER OF THE SYEDNA THAT THEY BE SOCIALLY OSTRACIZED FOR THEIR ADVOCACY OF REFORM WITHIN THE COMMUNITY. OSTRACISM

REQUIRES OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMUNITY NOT TO ASSOCIATE SOCIALLY WITH REFORMERS, MARRY WITH THEM OR PATRONIZE THEIR BUSINESSES. THERE HAVE ALSO BEEN COMPLAINTS THAT THEY ARE NOT PERMITTED TO USE THE COMMUNITY BURIAL PLOTS.

3. ACCORDING TO TARKUNDE, THE CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY IS CONCERNED NOT WITH THE RELIGIOUS ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY BUT WITH THE QUESTION OF INVESTIGATING WHETHER CIVIL, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC RIGHTS ARE BEING VIOLATED BY THE BOYCOTT OF THE REFORM ADVOCATES. THE NATWANI COMMISSION IS NAMED FOR ITS CHAIRMAN, A RETIRED BOMBAY HIGH COURT JUSTICE AND ITS MEMBERSHIP INCLUDES A PARSI WHO IS THE FORMER HEAD OF THE POLITICAL SCIENCE DEPARTMENT AT THE UNIVERSITY OF BOMBAY, TWO MUSLIM MEMBERS FROM THE ACADEMIC WORLD AND A CHRISTIAN. THE NATWANI COMMISSION HAS HELD ONE HEARING, SENT OUT QUESTIONNAIRES TO WHICH IT HAS RECEIVED ABOUT 1500 RESPONSES, WILL HOLD ANOTHER HEARING, AND EXPECTS TO ISSUE ITS REPORT TO THE PUBLIC IN TWO OR THREE MONTHS. DEPENDING UPON THE OUTCOME OF ITS INVESTIGATION, THE COMMISSION MIGHT ALSO RECOMMEND TO GOVERNMENT LEGAL MEASURES IF RIGHTS HAVE BEEN FOUND TO BE VIOLATED.

4. TARKUNDE SAID THAT THE IMAM AND HIS FOLLOWERS HAVE NOT COOPERATED WITH THE COMMISSION AND AVE CHARGED THAT THE COMMISSION IS INTERFERING IN THE RELIGIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

PAGE 03 NEW DE 09675 221248Z

AFFAIRS OF THE COMMUNITY. TARKUNDE SAID HE WAS INUNDATED BY A WELL-ORGANIZED TELEGRAM AND LETTER WRITING CAMPAIGN PROTESTING THE COMMISSION. WHILE THE SYEDNA'S FOLLOWERS DEMONSTRATED AGAINST THE COMMISSION'S HEARINGS AND HAVE NOT APPEARED BEFORE IT, TARKUNDE SAID THAT REPRESENTATIVES OF THE SYEDNA HAVE CALLED ON HIM TO EXPLAIN THEIR POSITION. HE, IN TURN, TRIKE TO MAKE CLEAR THE PURPOSES OF THE COMMISSION. TARKUNDE SAID THAT THE CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY DO NOT WISH TO EXACERBATE AN ALREADY TENSE SITUATION WITHIN THE DOMMUNITY, AND THE COMMISSION WILL BASE ITS INVESTIGATION ON THE QUESTIONNAIRES IT HAS RECEIVED AND THE VERIFICATION OF THOSE COMPLAINTS WHERE POSSIBLE.

5. THE INFIGHTING WITHIN THE BOHRA COMMUNITY IS OBVIOUSLY A COMPLEX SITUATION, AND AT TIMES HAS GENERATED CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL AND PRESS COVERAGE. SINCE THE CITIZENS FOR DEMOCRACY, HOWEVER, IS A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION AND THE NATWANI COMMISSION HAS NO OFFICIAL POWERS -- IT CAN ONLY INVESTIGATE THE SITUATION AND PUBLICIZE ITS FINDINGS -- WE DO NOT THINK SUSTAINABLE THE ALLEGATION THAT THE COMMISSION BY ITS EXISTENCE IS

VIOLATING THE HUMAN RIGHTS AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOM OF THE
SYEDNA. IN ANY EVENT, THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA HAS NOT
BEEN INVOLVED IN THE DISPUTE SO THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION
OF THE OFFICIAL SUPPRESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS OF ANY OF
THE DISPUTANTS.
BLOOD

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: US CONGRESSIONAL HEARINGS, INVESTIGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 22 jun 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978NEWDE09675
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780260-0733
Format: TEL
From: NEW DELHI
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780630/aaaabafn.tel
Line Count: 122
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: f191bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION NEA
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 STATE 155320
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2248031
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CONGRESSIONAL INQUIRY
TAGS: PINT, SHUM, IN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/f191bf83-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014